



# JAPANESE TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ROVANIEMI

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In this modern era of tourism, tourism actors need to be well informed and well prepared for ever changing and demanding nature of tourist. The tourists' nowadays decides and acts quickly. Moreover the development of technology has facilitated them to do so independently. The aim of this thesis is to explore different factors in developing the image of Rovaniemi into their minds and gain their perception who visited Rovaniemi. This thesis was commissioned by Safartica Oy which is nature based activity and service provider. Japanese tourists travel to Rovaniemi in higher number, both in summer and winter seasons. However, the perceptions they hold about Rovaniemi, their views towards the services they get and the level to which their expectation is fulfilled remains unknown. In order to gain information about their notion about every aspect of Rovaniemi and to determine the further roles of touristic actors, this research has been conducted.

This research is quantitative in nature. The author decided to use quantitative research method as the topic deals with the perception of the respondents; it was thought that the chosen method would be more effective. The research tool used is structured questionnaire. In order to reach to conclusion, data were collected from 51 Japanese tourists. The sampling method chosen was convenience sampling under non-probability sampling.

In order to gain the perceptions of the respondents, the questionnaire included questions under the topic such as the purpose of their visit, best time to travel to Rovaniemi, accommodation, transportation, shopping and entertainment facilities. The responses received were transferred to Webropol and then analysed. The replies from the respondents have been clearly presented along with charts in Data Analysis section. While analysing the responses, the researcher has also given suggestions to the tourism actors in Rovaniemi and steps necessary to be taken in order to create improved tourism destination for Japanese tourists. The research has concluded that the perception the Japanese tourists hold towards Rovaniemi is positive.

Key word (s) Japanese tourist, perception, travel behaviour

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The success of any product offered can be realised when its image is known. Likewise, a destination's image can be mapped down after going through the tourists' minds. This thesis aims to go through the Japanese tourists' mind and thoughts to find out how they see the city of Rovaniemi. The initial idea was to clarify the views of hoteliers in Lapland about the Japanese tourists. Later on the topic was changed as the current one seemed to be more interesting and broad. The objective of the thesis process was to clarify the image of what Japanese tourists expect, what they receive and what they want to experience relating to Rovaniemi. The thesis was commissioned by Safartica Oy, a travel agent very keen in knowing more about this particular tourist market.

The main driver behind this particular topic is the author's curiosity towards the Japanese tourists' travel choice to Rovaniemi, Lapland. Another reason behind this topic was also to find out the attraction factors and elements that are presented by Rovaniemi to Japanese tourists. Japanese tourism market in Lapland is seen to be a niche market but there is a huge potentiality to enlarge it. From the marketing point of view, it is crucial to know the characteristics of tourists in order to be able to sell them the products and cater to their needs more easily. We are able to serve the tourist only when we know about them. In this era of information and knowledge, every tourism actor must know what they deal with and know the measures to enhance the product and services that are being offered. From this point of view, the topic was thought of and then selected keeping in mind that the result would not only help to know more about Japanese tourists but also contribute to the service offering, approaches and marketing activities of the commissioner and other tourism actors.

The method used in the thesis is quantitative. To understand the perception of the Japanese tourists, the first step is to know what Rovaniemi has to offer to its visitors, what type of expectations they have for Rovaniemi and how

such expectations can be fulfilled. For the purpose of finding the answers through data collection, a structured questionnaire was prepared.

The results obtained could contribute to the thesis commissioner in product amendment, development and knowing the market one step closer. The limitation of the thesis is the time period of the survey conducted and limited amount of respondents. The survey was carried out from late July till mid October 2015; some of the tourists who visit Rovaniemi at this period of time may have different views and interests than Japanese tourists who usually come to Rovaniemi in other time of the year like in winter.

## 2 JAPAN

### 2.1 Japanese Outbound Travel Pattern

Japan is one of the world's leading economies. It is the third largest economy in the world with the GDP of 4.8 trillion USD as per year 2014 (Pérez 2014). The economy had not remained in their favor for Japanese. However, after the World War II; they were able to increase their economy by hard work, cooperation and small defense allocation. For three decades after the war economic growth was spectacular. A slow but steady growth in the economy continued until recession in 2008 A.D. The government was struggling to rise up the fallen economy when the rising Japanese economy was struck by the earthquake and tsunami disaster in 2011. In order to reconstruct the economy and reduce the public debt Japan has been increasing its consumer tax. (Central Intelligence Agency 2015.)

As per the international ranking of outbound travel in 2007, Japan was ranked as the 15<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. It was ranked 28<sup>th</sup> in international ranking of inbound travel in the world. Japanese are the second largest nation from Asia to travel internationally after China. According to Japan National Tourism Organization (2015) in the year 2014 the total number of outbound Japanese tourists was 16,903,388. Japanese travelling abroad made expenditure of 1.4 trillion yen in 2012 (Japanese tourism agency 2012). It is vital to understand the travel pattern of the tourist in order to make the necessary strategy to attract them. Information on potential tourist's travel pattern helps different travel agents and tourism actors to plan and schedule their marketing activities.

In Figure 1, we can see that from the end of July till the end of September more than 1.5 million Japanese has travelled. The next tourist outbound season is seen from February to early April. In the spring season, less than 1.25 million Japanese travelled abroad. The travel pattern has remained almost same in year 2013 and 2014. However, in 2015 the outbound pattern seems to be fluctuating, in January and February the outflow of Japanese tourist is seen under 1.25 million and started to rise only in the early March.

Interestingly, in contrast, Finland receives most Japanese during the Christmas season while the chart does not show that Japanese travel much in that season. From here we can conclude that there is potentiality to develop and promote the tourism flow besides the winter months in Finland for Japanese tourists.

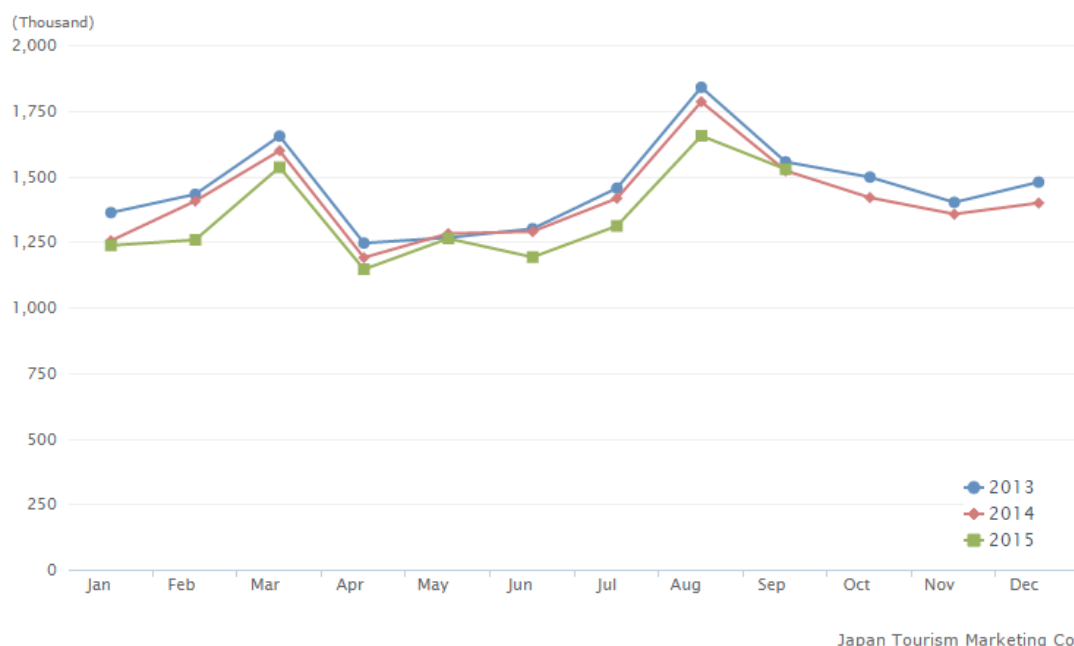


Figure 1. Japanese Tourist Departure Pattern (Japanese Tourism Marketing Co. 2012)

## 2.2 Japanese Culture

Japanese people are one of the hardest working people in the world. They believe in quality production and are renowned for it. Japanese people are most punctual in the world; they believe that punctuality depicts the reputation of the people, it is strictly followed by them and they expect it to be followed by foreigners too. (Japan Society and Culture Complete Report 2010.)

From the early age, they learn to work in a group; this is also the reason behind Japanese doing their task in groups and aiming towards the common goal. They are taught how to remain calm in a stressful situation. Almost 85 percent of Japanese follow Buddhism and Shintoism. Both religions are peaceful in nature, so Japanese behavior and lifestyle have inherited the



peaceful quality in them. In general Japanese are superstitious; they believe in the existence of mythical creatures, they highly regard and respect the spirits of the unknown world. (Japan Society and Culture Complete Report 2010.)

They have the culture of receiving and giving gifts in various special occasions, gifts are not only given to friends and family but also to the business associates. Giving gifts to the guests and giving gifts while going to casual visits is also very common. There are certain rules to follow while offering gifts, it should not be given in odd numbers as it symbolizes bad luck, it should not contain 4 digits or anything associated with number 4 and it should not be packed with red color or any other gift tags and writing with red ink in the greeting card symbolizes funeral. Understanding the cultural difference is vital task in order to serve them. Culture speaks the people's lifestyle and choice; it is culture which guides us in the way of life including our behavior. (Japan Society and Culture Complete Report 2010.)

The Japanese culture can be looked at using model of national culture by Professor Greet Hofstede. There are six dimensions in the model which helps to know about the Japanese society and culture. The figure 2 helps in understanding the cultural difference Japan and Finland.

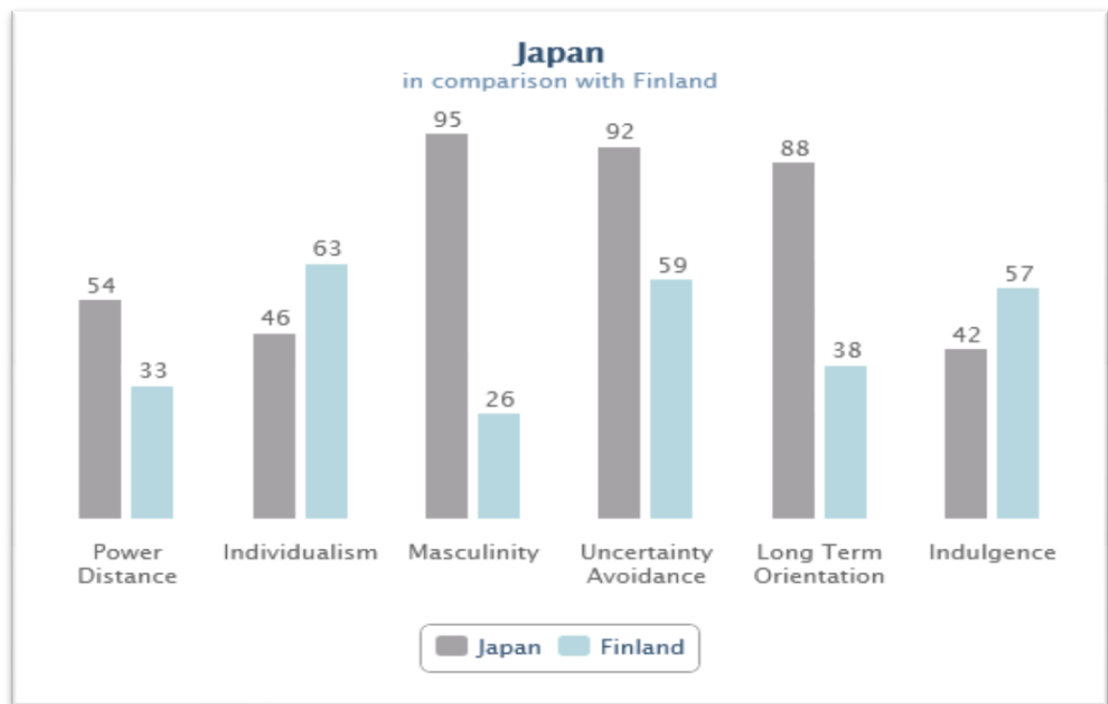


Figure 2. Japanese Culture in Comparison to Finland Though Hofstede's Model of Cultural Dimension (The Hofstede Center 2014)

Firstly, power distance is defined as the extent to which less powerful member of the organization or institution accepts that power distribution is not equal. Japan has 54 score out of 100 in power distance which means that hierarchy in the work position exists but in moderate level. Japan's power distance is seen less when compared with other Asian cultures. The decisions are taken or confirmed by the each hierarchical position. Finland has 33 score out of 100 in power distance. It is seen that Finnish work position does not have much hierarchy in work environment. It can be also said that the worker's interest and values are important and are considered in decision making processes. (The Hofstede Center 2014.)

Secondly, Hofstede referred individuality as the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. Japan has 46 points on individualism. It is clear that Japan is more inclined to the collectivism rather than individualism. Japanese give importance to the group's harmony and expression. Of course, they think for themselves as an individual while working in as loyal staff but in the society they work in betterment of the

society not only for oneself. Finland with the score of 63 has individual society than Japanese. The individual society concerns about the individual and their close one. The individuals do not have much personal relationship and the employee/ employer relationship is based on contract. (The Hofstede Center 2014.)

The masculinity dimension demonstrates the heroism, achievement and rewards for success. Masculinity refers to the distribution of the emotional roles between genders, and which gender norms are accepted by the society. In contrast, the femininity represents the soft part, care, quality of life and cooperation. Japan has 95 score in this dimension, this means the Japanese have fierce competition among groups, they have winning spirit, the masculinity can be seen in form of excellence and perfection in the work done and in the products. Not only this, but it is also felt in the form of material services and presentation. Another masculine factor prevalent in Japanese society is their dedication and work addiction. Finland has 26 score on masculinity which refers that the Finnish society has feminine society. Feminine society values equality and well being. It focuses on “working in order to live”, issues are solved via compromises and negotiations. (The Hofstede Center 2014.)

Uncertain avoidance refers to how a country or society tolerates the uncertainty. It deals with the uncertainty hold by the future, as there are certain events and happenings that are not in control such as natural disaster and death. Some countries are more prepared to these uncertain happening than other. Japan is constantly under threat by natural calamities like earthquake, tsunamis and typhoons. Japan has 92 score in uncertain avoidance. People in Japan are prepared and calm; they have certain ways of conducting the task and intend to continue doing it. Finland on the other hand has the 59 score which represents that it is also country avoiding uncertainty. Security in the society and individuals is important element of motivation. (The Hofstede Center 2014.)

Long term orientation deals with the country or society's priorities to the past, present and future. The culture having high score in this dimension is more focused on their future. They value persistence, perseverance, adaptiveness and saving. In contrast, the cultures with lower score opt to be present and past focused. There is high value of tradition, social hierarchy and social obligation. Japan has 88 score in this dimension. They believe that they should do whatever they can in their lifetime. In the corporate side, Japanese are future oriented, they believe companies are not meant to just make huge amount of money but also be able to serve the society and generations to come. (Grimsley 2014.) Unlike Japan, Finland has 38 score. They have great respect for tradition, small effort or willingness to save for the future. They believe in the absolute truth and focus on achieving quick results. (The Hofstede Center 2014.)

Finally Indulgence, it is the factor which shows how people are showing their desires and impulses. The state where there is weak control over the desire and impulses is called "indulgence" and oppositely when there is strict control then is referred to as "restraint". Japan has 42 score which mean that Japanese people are more pessimistic and have control over their desire. People tend to involve into same activities that have been followed by the society. They have the perception that if they would do as they desire then it would harm the social norms and values. Finland in this dimension has 57 score which indicates that Finns are optimistic. They are more involved into activities for having fun and enjoying their life. Leisure time and activities have high importance and spend money for it as per their wish and desire. (The Hofstede Center 2014.)

### 2.3 Statistics on Japanese Tourists

Finland recorded 176,919, 205,988 and 191,460 number of overnight stays by the Japanese in the year 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively (Visit Finland 2015). Among the Nordic countries, Finland has the highest number of overnight stays by Japanese tourist Figure 3 shows the share of overnight stays of Japanese from 2003 to 2012 among the Nordic countries. Finland has the biggest percent of overnight stays as compared with other three countries. This is also an indicator of development of tourism market for Japanese tourists.

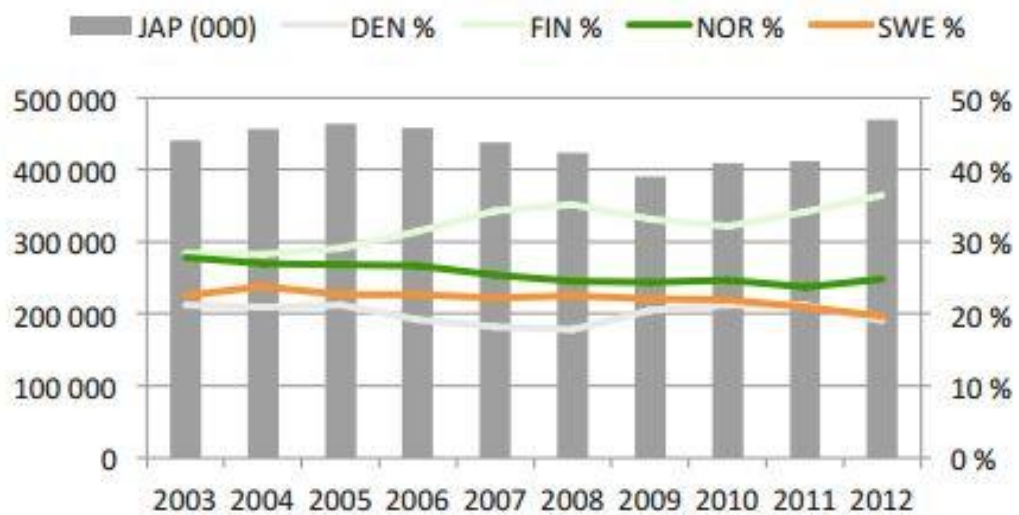


Figure 3. Nordic countries share of Japanese overnights (Visit Finland 2013)

In 2012 a total of 143,000 Japanese tourists visited Finland. Among these tourists, 64% were on leisure trip, 13% were on business trip and rests were divided into other trips and visiting friends and relatives. Only 9% of Japanese visitors' overnight stay was with their friends or relatives, 88% of them spent the night in hotels or motels and total of 39% visitor used packaged travel trips. The average night spent by Japanese tourists are 1-9 nights. In the market overview report on Japanese tourist done by Visit Finland, it was mentioned that Japanese tourists spend average of 528€/ visit and 126€ /day where most of their money was used for shopping (40%). (Visit Finland 2013.)

There is a general view that Japanese visits Finland for winter products than other summer tourism products. The statistics proves this general belief wrong. Figure 4 demonstrates that Japanese travel more during summer than in winter.

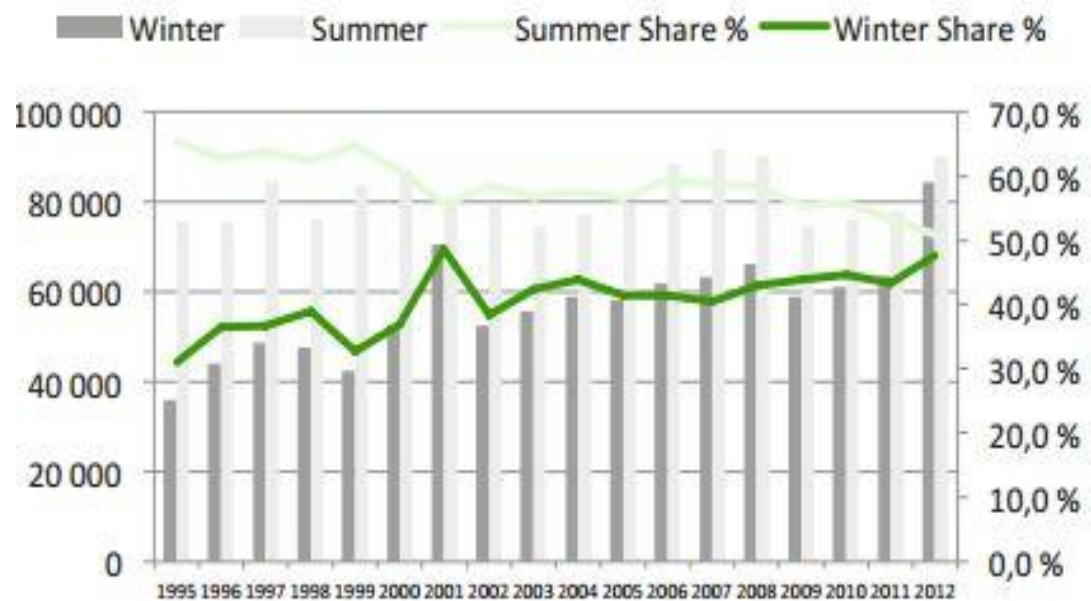


Figure 4. The ratio of summer and winter season (VisitFinland 2013)

According to the market overview on Japanese tourist, August and September are the busiest months for summer travel, in winter Japanese visit due to Christmas. In 2012, 51% of total Japanese visited during summer season and 48% of them visited in winter season. This also indicates that Lapland do not have to depend upon the winter products, festive season and Santa Claus in order to attract more Japanese visitor to Lapland. (VisitFinland 2013.)

Figure 5 shows the number of nights spent and arrivals of Japanese in Rovaniemi. It is also seen that the night spent are almost double the number of arrivals.

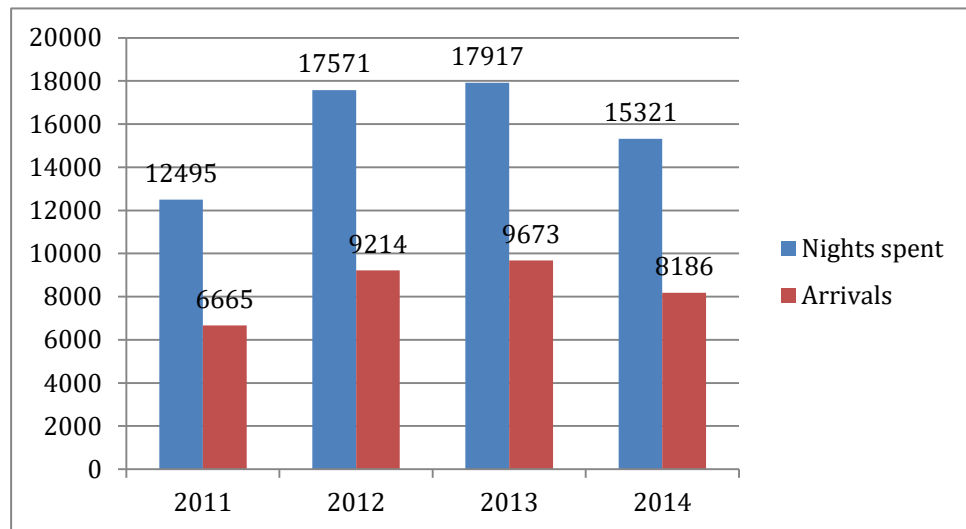


Figure 5. Number of Japanese arrivals and night spent in Rovaniemi (Visit Finland 2015)

Rovaniemi has been receiving 8000-9000 Japanese tourists each year since last three years. The numbers of Japanese visitors are relatively low in Rovaniemi considering the fact that 102, 154 Japanese arrived Finland in 2014 but only 8,186 arrived to Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland which now provides varieties of winter and summer tourism products. (Visit Finland 2015.)

## 2.4 Promotion of Finnish Tourism to Japan

Visit Finland is public organization responsible for promotion and development of Finnish tourism internationally. It works jointly with the ministries, travel businesses, transport companies and Finnish regions. The joint cooperation includes research, product development and tourism marketing to Finland from different parts of the world. Visit Finland is represented in many target countries namely; China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Russia and USA (VisitFinland 2015). It has been doing different promotional activities to different countries via various means like social media, image marketing, product campaigns, PR and media work and B2B marketing.

For 2015, it had two promotional campaigns for Japan, i.e. summer and winter campaign. The summer campaign was held from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015 targeted to modern humanist with the concept of meaningful encounters. The winter campaign would be held from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2015. In winter campaign, the targeted area is Tokyo and targeted group is modern humanist. In both of the campaigns, nature of Finland is marketed in the way that touches the heart and soul of the clients. Visit Finland is also doing B2B promotions like, Tour Operator FAM trip from Japan, Moi Moi workshops Tokyo, Seoul, and Taipei and tourism expo in Japan. (Visit Finland 2015.)

Especially for the Japanese market, Visit Finland has created a new range of package tours, i.e. “Europe for solo lady travelers with tour escort” and “Programs only for you with tour escort”. The former package was designed for the women travelling alone with the average age of 68 and who could also participate in the exclusive package tours. The latter package is relatively expensive, price ranging from 6000€ to 8000€ and the target audience is wealthy retired couple. (Visit Finland 2015.)

Additionally, the guide book to Finland in Japanese language has been effective means of marketing in Japan which is also regarded as cheapest and effective marketing. Visit Finland had launched a mobile campaign in



mid-March 2014 named “Finngenerator” which was a great success. The Finngenerator application lets a user to generate the Finnish name using the nature and Kalevala mythology. This application rose Japanese visitors in visit Finland’s site in surprising manner. The Japanese visitors to the site were recorded 100 000 in just four days of the application’s opening (Visit Finland 2014). Visit Finland later in spring 2015 launched another application named “Finnscope” which lets user to discover Finnish horoscope and know more about it. Only within the two weeks of it being launched in Facebook and Twitter over 300, 000 Japanese have already used the application. These applications have been very fruitful as lots of Japanese tourists who used these applications eventually go through the other articles in the sites (Visit Finland 2015). These applications depict the Finnish nature, its year around natural cycle and unique characteristics of Finland. It helps to develop new market with the flow of information about Finland. New and young generation will know more via these applications.

### 3 LAPLAND

#### 3.1 Eight seasons

For the better understanding of Finland from the tourism point of view, it has been divided into four different regions i.e. Lapland, Lakeland, Coast and Archipelago and Helsinki (Visit Finland 2015.) Lapland has 21 municipalities; Rovaniemi being the capital of Lapland has biggest number of inhabitants of them all. Lapland has population density of 2/km<sup>2</sup>. It shares border with Russian federation, Norway and Sweden. The tourist regions in Lapland are Enontekiö-Kilpisjärvi, Pallas, Olos, Ylläs, Pyhä-Luosto, Suomu, Rovaniemi, Saariselkä-Inari, Salla, Posio, Tornionjoki River Valley, Meri-Lappi, Levi, Suomu and Kemijärvi. (Regional council of Lapland 2015.)



Figure 6. Tourism Lapland (Regional Council of Lapland 2013)

Finland receives tourists from many parts of the world. Japanese tourists are one of them, even though in small number comparatively to tourists from UK and France. In the year 2014, Finnish Lapland received 20,205 Japanese tourists. There has been a decrease in the number of Japanese tourists spending nights in accommodation establishments in Lapland by 21.9% in 2014 than the year before, while in 2013 there was an increment by 6.5%. (Statistics Finland 2015.) In the year 2012 the average number of nights spent by the Japanese tourist in accommodation facilities in Finnish Lapland was 3.2 which were better than in the year 2010 and 2009 which had 2.4 and 2.7 nights respectively (Statistics Finland 2014.) From 1 January to 31 December 2012 Finland received 143,000 Japanese tourists. Meanwhile only 116,000 Chinese tourists visited Finland. (Statistics Finland 2013.) With the title of cleanest corner of the world, Lapland is branded as "Above Ordinary" under which there are five factors that make Lapland unique, attractive and

extraordinary.

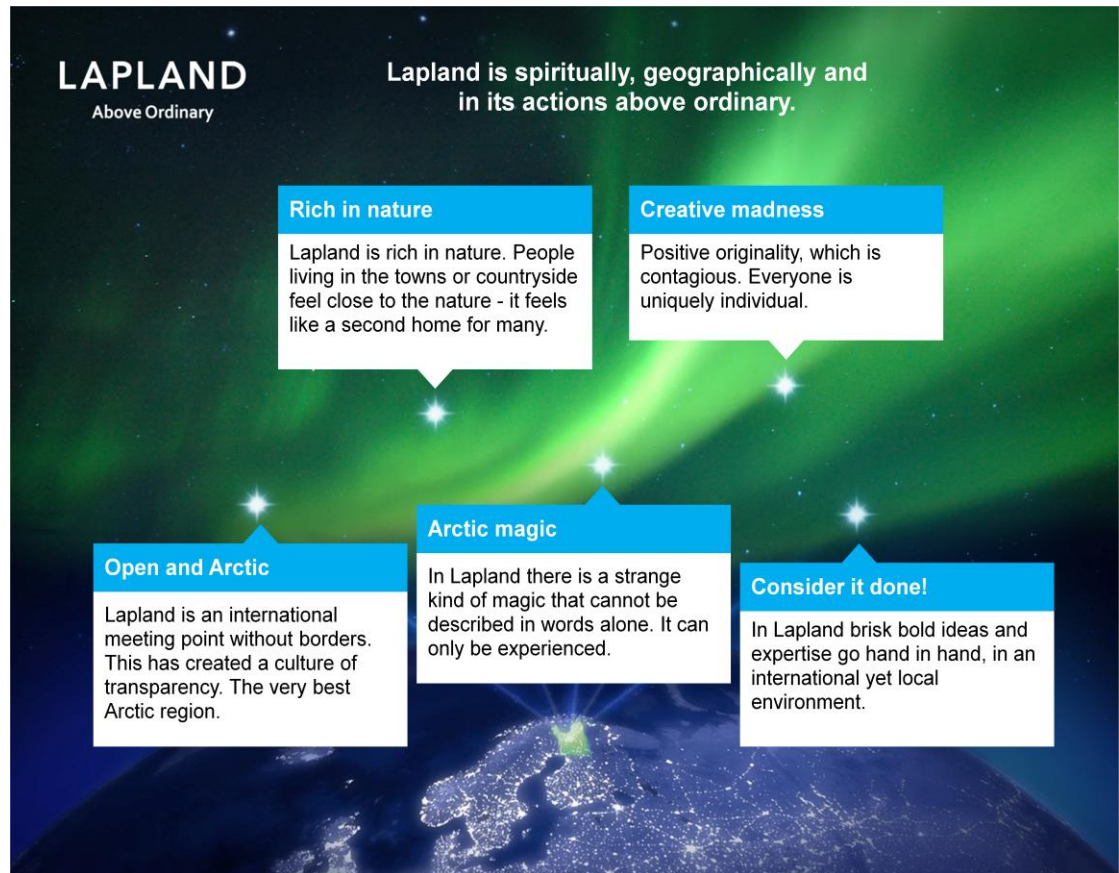


Figure 7. Lapland Brand “Above Ordinary” (Regional council of Lapland 2014)

Unlike other regions in Finland and typical idea of having 4 seasons in a year, Lapland has eight seasons, these seasons were broken down from main four seasons, and these periods have their own distinct characters as transformation takes place too fast in Lapland.

- i. First Snow: Lapland receives first snow in October or in November. It may take couple of times of melting and snowing process in order to snow be remained. Usually the first snow is also referred as “black snow”. This season brings excitement and open doors to several winter activities. (Visit Rovaniemi 2013.)
- ii. Christmas: The season of festive, joy and happiness. It has the long dark days including polar night. People are seen busy shopping and decorating. Rovaniemi receives lots of tourists all around the world as

it is resided by Santa Clause. Many tourists are often blessed with the nature's wonder, Aurora borealis. (Visit Rovaniemi 2013.)

- iii. Frosty winter: It falls in the months January and February. The frosty winter season, many times referred to as heart of winter is very cold but people do not seem to be afraid of it. With the few hours of day light and with numerous activities like skiing, snowmobiling, husky and reindeer rides the season look more vibrant. (Visit Rovaniemi 2013.)
- iv. Crusted Snow: The season invites to the bright days and perfect for walking, skiing or ice fishing. Falling in the month of late February to early April, people are seen to be enjoying the light and more often outdoors engaged in skiing, snowshoeing. (Visit Rovaniemi 2013.)
- v. Ice break up: It brings the presence of spring in the air and slowly the days are felt to be longer. This season lies in April and May. The return of birds, water flowing down the river, bright days and green plants taking its territory again, life begins to wake up as snow starts to melt. (Visit Rovaniemi 2013.)
- vi. Midnight Sun: Brightest nights of the year and the season of various summer festivals, this season begin from early June and ends at early July. The environment is glazed with music, dance, food, drinks and sun. Famous Midnight Sun festival is held in Sodankylä and various other festivals are organized throughout Lapland. (Visit Rovaniemi 2013.)
- vii. Harvest season: Days already starts to get shorter, in this season which last till August from July. Different types of berries are harvested, fishing and hunting is done in order to stock food for cold dark winter. (Visit Rovaniemi 2013.)
- viii. Colorful autumn: This is the season for nature to prepare itself for winter; nature starts to change its color. The leaves start to grown golden, yellow and red, this period is also referred to *Ruska* in Finnish. It is also the best time for hiking, enjoying and admiring the colorful nature. (VisitRovaniemi 2013.)

### 3.2 Seasonality in Lapland

One of the characteristics of tourism industry is seasonality. The demand of destination is high at the certain period of year and there is the time when the demand is very low. This is called the seasonality in tourism. Any given destination has to receive steady amount of tourists in order to be immune from this strong behavior of tourism industry. The fluctuation in the demand creates seasonality in tourism industry. (Kadampully, Mok & Sparks 2001.)

Seasonality can be a problem to many tourism actors in a destination, all the major sales should be done in the particular time of the year and company has to basically sustain the whole year with low sales and depend on seasonal income. The phenomenon of seasonality is also seen as a problem by most of the tourism actors. Seasonality is caused by different factors such as Natural, Institutional and Additional. Natural causes mean tourist flow causes by natural forces like, air, water, sunlight, daylight, night, snow etc. Institutional causes are based on religion, society, culture, tourist's decision and behavior. The additional causes are the causes other than natural and institutional causes, for instance, any sporting event, sporting season, habit of the travelers to travel in certain period of time, social pressure and fashion. (Corluka 2015.)

In case of Lapland, seasonality in tourism is caused due to the natural factors. Lapland receives most of the tourists in the winter season than in other season. Figure 8 shows the seasonality trend in Lapland of four years through the figures of nights spend by foreigners.

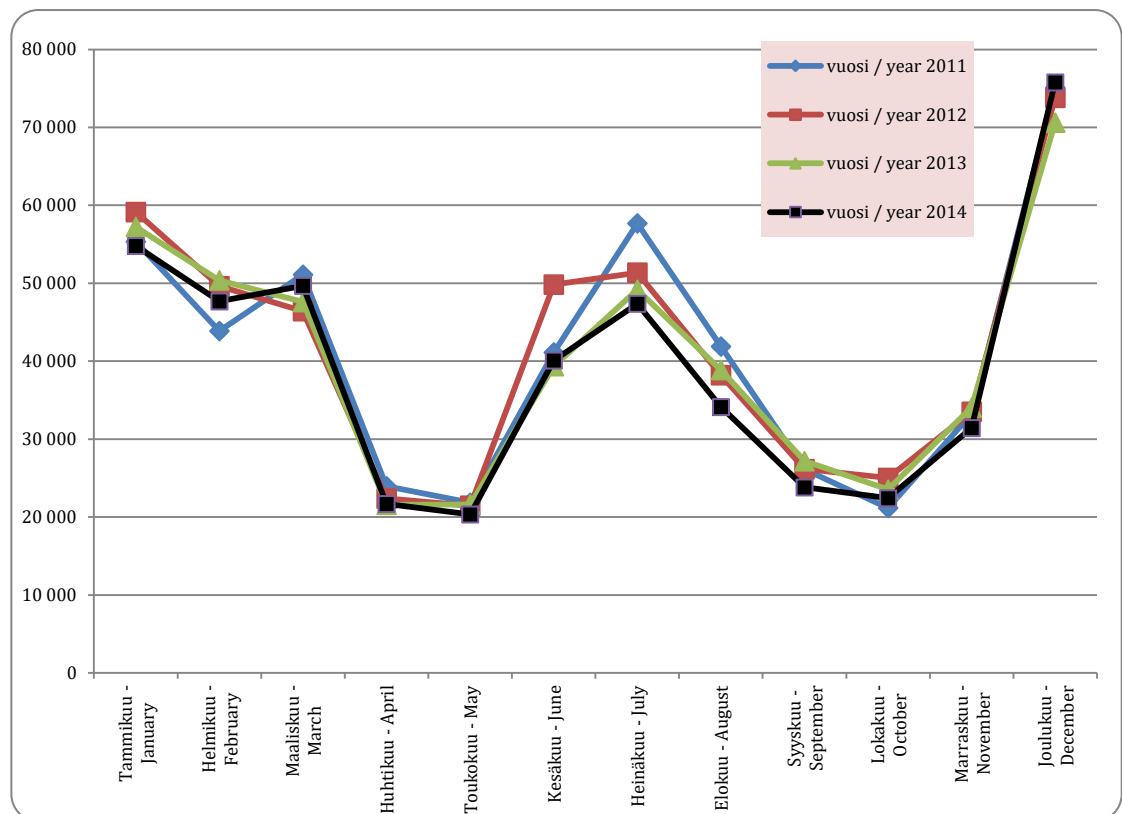


Figure 8. Nights spent by foreigners in Lapland (Regional council of Lapland 2015)

It can be derived from figure 8 that Lapland received most of the tourists from end of November and is at its peak at December. The next fall in nights spent by foreigners is felt from mid-March till end of May. As summer approached the gradual increment in the flow of tourist is seen from May till mid of July. Next, the steady decline in the nights spent continued to mid- November and to rise from the end of November. This trend is same from the year 2011 to 2014. On the basis of the chart above, we can conclude that Lapland has two low seasons and two high seasons in a year. Therefore, seasonality exists in Lapland.

### 3.3 Rovaniemi as a Destination

Destination is generally seen as tangible physical space or intangible as they produce images, experiences, planning and memories. Destination must contain the core four features for it to be called as destination, i.e. Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility and Ancillary services (Cooper 2012). According to the UNWTO, "A tourism destination is a physical space in which tourists spend at least one overnight, it includes tourism products such as support services and attractions and tourist resources within one day's return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community and can nest and network to form larger destinations." (UNWTO 2002.)

When we talk about the destination, it is very important know how it has been able to maintain its image and brand to its visitors in general. Destination image has major influence on the tourist to generate the travel intention (Ferreira 2011). Destination image not only concerns the perception of the tourists or an individual but it relates to the overall, whole impression generated by the destination. Here, overall impression meaning both tangible characteristics such as attraction, facilities, price level and intangible characteristics like feeling of safety, hospitality, friendliness of the people. (Echtner & Ritchie 1991.)

Rovaniemi is the capital of Finnish Lapland and the official home town of Santa Claus situated right on the Arctic Circle. With an area of 8017 km<sup>2</sup> and population of 61,000; it is one of the biggest towns in Europe. (Rovaniemi Kaupunki 2015.) Rovaniemi serves as a town very close to nature. Rovaniemi is not only about Christmas and Santa Clause; it provides various choices to people like nature, sport and wellness, architecture, snow and ice, culture, heritage and history. People can enjoy and experience the natural phenomenon of polar days and polar night or engage themselves in skiing, snowmobiling or even visit to authentic reindeer farms and meet with real reindeer herders.



Attractions are the core motivator of the travel; it provides tourists the reason to visit a particular destination. However, defining the visitor attraction is mammoth's task as the environments in which they operate are ever changing. From a cultural perception, things attractive to one tourist with different cultural background may not be attractive to the another one. Attractions are not only used by tourist and tourism industry, it could be simultaneously used by forestry, religion and agriculture. The proper management, cooperation and coordination are required for the success of the attraction. Attractions have significant role in economy generation in the destination and it may be operated by private sectors, public sector and other voluntary organizations. (Cooper 2012.) Attractions can be manmade, natural, objects or facilities that have a special appeal factor not only to the tourists but also to the local visitors (Cook, Marqua & Yale 2002). Some of the attractions in Rovaniemi are listed as follows:-

- i. Christmas and Santa Claus: More than 2 billion people celebrate Christmas all around the world. Rovaniemi was listed among the world's best Christmassy places in 2014 by CNN. The other attractions like Ranua Zoo, Sirmakko Reindeer farm, Artikkum; Arctic snow hotel are also mentioned in the article (Lake & Ma 2014.) Santa Clause village and Santa Park, Napapiiri was listed by Forbes.com as World's top Christmas Destinations (Forbes.com 2015.) Tourists can visit Santa Claus in Santa Claus village which was established in 1985. It receives half million mails to Santa Clause every year from all around the world (Timmons 2014.) Santa Park located 2 km from Santa Claus village and Joulukka are visited by 70,000 people from 41 different nations (Santapark.com 2015.)
- ii. Snow and Ice: Snow and Ice have been building the image of Rovaniemi. The tourism in Lapland is based on snow. The activities such as skiing, Ice skating, snowshoeing, husky and reindeer safaris and snowmobiling is based on snow and ice. (Tuulentie 2010.) The establishment of Arctic snow hotel has added an attraction factor in Rovaniemi. It delivers unique experience to its guests, product ranging

from snow sauna, ice restaurant, overnight at arctic glass igloo to wedding ceremony at one of its Ice Chapel (Arctic Snow Hotel and Glass Igloos 2014).

- iii. Safaris and winter sports: Winter safari tours has been one of the most important and wanted activities in Lapland. Rovaniemi provides different safari facilities, i.e. snowmobile, husky, reindeer, fishing, hiking, horseback riding and squad trips. There are 25 safari companies in Rovaniemi. Rovaniemi is also a perfect place for winter sports such as ice skating, skiing and snowboarding. Other activities like winter swimming, winter driving, snowshoeing are also possible. Ounasvaara ski resort and Santasport are two main companies for sport enthusiasts. (VisitRovaniemi 2013.)
- iv. Culture: Arktikum museum, Arctic science center and Korundi art house are the cultural attraction in Rovaniemi. Arktikum takes back visitors to the history and culture of Finnish Lapland and Sami people whereas in arctic science center, visitors can see different arctic animals and matters relating to the climate change. Korundi is an art museum which focuses on Finnish contemporary art and Northern art. (VisitRovaniemi 2013.)
- v. Nature: Rovaniemi is surrounded with wonderful nature. The eight seasons makes the nature beautiful and more vibrant. Nature around is changing constantly and is offering the immense beauty. Nature provides different possibility in different season. The activities such as berry picking, hiking, walking, fishing and camping deliver different experience to the tourist. Lapland is also known as the cleanest corner of the Europe, therefore the nature here is pristine and pure. (Regional council of Lapland 2014.)
- vi. Arctic lights: The location of Rovaniemi in the Arctic Circle makes it possible to experience different natural light phenomenon like, mid-night sun and northern lights. Besides these lights, sky is seen colorful as per the different season, for instance, in Christmas season the sky can be seen as blue shade, frosty winter calls for the pink sky, autumn has its own autumn color filling sky with the magnificent blues. Not

only during evening colorful sky can be seen during early morning too. (Autere 2014.) Northern lights are particularly famous among the Japanese tourists because of their myths and beliefs. Japanese people believe that if they have conception under the influence of Northern lights then they will have a baby boy or beautiful children. (Lanesskog 2013.)

### 3.4 Safartica Oy

For the purpose of commissioning the thesis in the initial stage, I approached many tourism actors in Rovaniemi but I was not successful. Finding a commissioner created delays in starting the thesis as my thesis was also based on the wish of the commissioner. Luckily, I got an instant reply from Safartica Oy which helped to start my thesis as soon as possible. The commissioner had previous experience of commissioning the thesis too which made the task easier for me.

Present Safartica Oy was founded initially with the name of Snow and River Adventures of Lapland Oy. In 2008 the company brand name Safartica was bought, gradually it started to make sales overseas and spread the market all over Europe, China and India. It was only in 2011 when the company was placed at the current location (Koskikatu 9) which led in remarkable increase of walk in customers. Again in 2013 Safartica bought Ylläs adventures and started the hotel business in Ylläsjärven tunturihotel. The hotel was rented out to the private entrepreneur but the safaris are still run by Safartica. (Antikainen 2015.)

The turnover of Safartica is seen in an increasing rate as its turnover was 0,5 million € in 2010, 1 million € in 2011, 1,5 million € in 2012, 2,5 million in 2013, 3,2 million in 2014 and 3,5 million and counting in 2015. The biggest markets of Safartica are Israel, Holland, France and Italy. Almost all of the turnovers are from abroad i.e. 95%. Tour operators generates 45% of total turnover, 15% are from the charters and 30% are from the own sales. (Antikainen 2015.)

Safartica is a nature based activity and service provider which operates in Rovaniemi and Ylläs. It provides wide range of activities all-round the year. The major activities in winter are snowmobiling, reindeer/husky safaris, northern Lights trips and the major activities in summer are river rafting, visit to reindeer and husky farm and canoeing. Alongside the activities for tourist it also provides accommodation services both in Rovaniemi and in Ylläs. It provides weekly safaris and extreme safaris in both Rovaniemi and Ylläs. Extreme safaris are a bit harsh in nature and may be a challenge to some extent. Additionally, it has autumn safaris in Rovaniemi; it also provides all-inclusive packages for Christmas and New Year.

## 4 TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR

### 4.1 Travel Motivation

A Tourist's travel motivation is a part of the tourism demand process. It is the core element of travel, so as to say, if there is no motivation there exists no demand for travel. However, it is not necessary that all the travelers are aware of motivation factor that lead them to travel. (Sharpley 2006.)

Finding out the motivation of tourists will help to find out why people feel the need to be a tourist and how these needs could be satisfied. Motivation can be seen on the basis of two subjects i.e. psychological phenomenon and sociological phenomenon. The former one deals with the intrinsic motivation which means that people may have some particular desire to do things, which are not affected by external elements like different forms of advertisement, discount offers etc. It is the personal need of the potential tourist. It includes; seeking of freedom, escape, relationship, self-development and relaxation. The latter one is the motivational force which is caused primarily by external forces rather than personal needs and wants. Although these motivations come from external factors they can later become personal needs. Here, external forces may be viewed as travel due to business, friend and family influences and modern society. (Sharpley 2006.)

According to Pizam and Mansfeild (1999), 'Motivation is the concept of need'. Needs are the forces that stimulate the motivated behavior, therefore in order to know the human motivation it is necessary to find out the needs of the people and the ways to fulfill them. Furthermore, it could be said that the needs of the people is the core generator of motivation (Pizam & Mansfeild 1999). One of the most accepted theories for tourist motivation is Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Cook, Marqua & Yale 2002)

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need of people begins at the bottom level with basic psychological needs, after its fulfillment it tends to move upwards to the fulfillment of the other needs gradually. People will always work up the hierarchy level as their needs are fulfilled at each level; it is the basic human nature. In terms of tourism, travelers may seek fulfillment of multiple needs while participating in tourism activity. Therefore, tourists may seek to have their basic needs, for example; easy accessibility to the food outlet be fulfilled along with self-actualization needs like being on an educational tour. (Cook, Marqua & Yale 2002.)

## 4.2 Tourists' Expectations and Behavior

Tourists' expectations are a vital subject that tourism actors should know in order to facilitate them in the best possible way. Tourist satisfaction can only be fulfilled when the expectations of the tourists are known. Usually, companies try to provide more than what is initially offered to their clients to make their experience unforgettable. Expectation may not always concern the services provided by the tour companies or the tourism actors but it may also concern the places, people and environment.

According to the definition from the Oxford dictionary expectation is 'a strong belief that something will happen or be the case' (Oxford dictionaries 2015). In tourism context, this means that the tourist has pre-determined and imaged how his/her journey is going to be. The expectations of tourists are developed from the very initial phase of travel i.e. from the first time when they see images, videos, clips of different destinations and hear about the destination. Expectations build up in the minds of people until their journey starts. External sources like; books, movies, magazines and verbal sources such as family, friends and teachers add up to help create an expectation. For instance; when a Japanese person sees a picture of a northern lights in a magazine and hears about it from a friend who have seen them, some kind of an expectation may build into his/her mind about the northern lights, the color, size and fortune or myths related to it. It is assumed that tourists always have certain types of expectations. Not only people develop the expectation from what they hear and see but also use their imagination to add up to their desired expectation. After the completion of the actual vacation or journey the tourist then compares the overall expectation to the actual services and trip. (Gisolf 2010.) It is most likely that if tourists' expectations are not met due to internal or external factors then they will not visit the same place again.

There are various types of tourists; they are diverse on the basis of age, culture, motivation, preference of activities and even destination. It is very important to specify the type of tourist before analyzing their behavior. For instance, a family tourist would not have the same way of visiting destination

than the back pack travelers neither would a pilgrim behave in the same manner as the sea, sun and sand tourist. (Pearce 2007.)

According to some researchers such as Nash (1978) and Tyagi (1989), tourists have their own culture. Tourists' behavior also depends upon their own socio cultural background or even national culture as a whole. Tourism actors from the tourism industry have indicated that the tourists from different nations act differently. For instance, Japanese tourists have been characterized as tourists travelling in groups, having short vacations, very polite; always follow rules, untiring photographers and heavy spenders. The study has also suggested that the food service had a stronger influence on Japanese choice of destination while compared to Americans and Canadians. (Mansfeld & Pizam 1999.)

People show various behaviors while buying a product, some people buy as per the necessity and the outcome of the product while others buy certain products just because they are brand or store loyal. Consumer behavior varies according to different approaches such as cognitive, habitual and reinforcement. In figure 10, Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) have prepared a model on consumer behavior which demonstrates different stages that the purchasers will pass through.



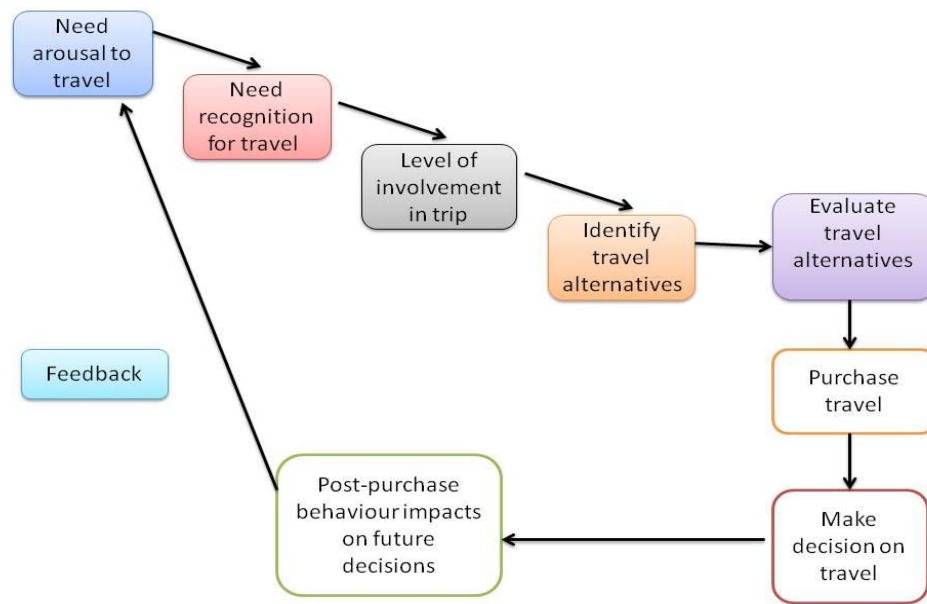


Figure 10. Model of Consumer Behaviour (Sirakaya & Woodside 2005)

The first stages are need arousal and recognition to travel, a purchaser must have a need arousal to travel and recognize it. After that s/he has to formulate different goals and objectives relating to travel. When the mind is set up then the next step is to generate and identify different alternatives available. While searching for alternative destinations of travel s/he needs to use various sources of information in order to come up with the decision. A decision is made among the alternatives and the purchase of the travel is made. Travel to destination is made after its purchase. The next stage is the post purchase behavior impacts; it is the feelings and experiences that the destination has created. Positive feelings and experiences will affect positively in their future travel to the destination. Some purchasers may feel that the choice they made was wrong and it would have been better if s/he had chosen another alternative.

### 4.3 Tourist Experience

Nowadays experience has become a synonym for the travel and tourism industry. It is essential to know difference between the experiences and the services that a company delivers to their customers. According to Pine & Gilmore (1999), 'Experiences are as distinct from service as services are from goods'. They also mention that 'Companies stage an experience when they engage customers in a memorable way'. Companies now focus on delivering an extra factor with their service in order to deliver a memorable experience to the tourist; this has resulted in staging an experience. They no longer sell the so called "services" but instead are offering the end result which is created by using different services, goods and human resources as their props. Tourists are more aware of experiences and they examine or inspect the value for money they spend on services to be able to achieve memorable experience. (Pine & Gilmore 1999.)

According to Sanna Tarssanen (2009), a meaningful experience can be only delivered in a face to face situation which means that the service provider must know how to stage the experience to their guests. As the tourists are becoming more intelligent, curious and well informed they are seeking the best experience. The experience pyramid model can be used to design, analyze and develop the product that provides the guest a meaningful experience.

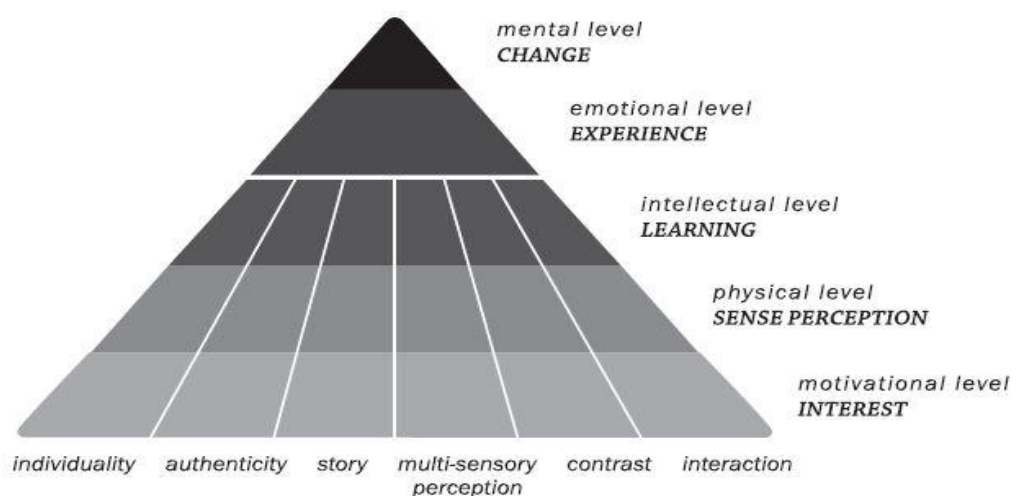


Figure 11. Model of Experience Pyramid (Tarssanen 2009, 11)

In the horizontal axis of the above figure, the elements needed to create a memorable experience are given. Each of these elements should be considered according to the theme of the product. The tourist experience starts even before the actual journey begins, it starts from the marketing of the tourism product or from the sources where a potential tourist gets his/her motivations from. After this motivational level the physical presence of the tourist in the destination determines the experience, it relies on the physical materials in the destination and the physical wellbeing of the tourists themselves.

Next, the product should affect customers on the intellectual level, it is when the product can engage or result in learning, thinking, applying or generating tourists' thoughts and opinions, thus fulfilling the intellectual level of meaningful experience. A meaningful experience should be able to touch the emotions of the tourists. Although, it is hard to predict the emotional reaction of an individual tourist, the experience should be able to release the positive emotional feelings. Finally, after fulfillment of the emotional level to its peak, the mental level positive experience is delivered. These experiences are strong enough to change the tourist's way of life, state of mind, it brings about a personal change in the tourist. (Tarssanen 2009.)

## 5 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method for conducting the survey was clearly set as quantitative method from the initial phase of the thesis process. The nature of the research objectives made author to choose particular research method. After the thesis topic selection, the research method was immediately thought as quantitative. In the thesis, the collection of data was done by questionnaire. (See Appendix 1.)The questionnaire was given to the tourist in person in different locations such as Rovaniemi City Center, Santa Clause Village and Rovaniemi Airport. The process of data collection lasted from late August to end of October 2015. Data was first collected as the questionnaire in the paper form and later the collected data was transferred to webropol. Webropol made the data analysis process easier and convenient.

Quantitative research can be used to obtain the data relating to the attitudes and beliefs through data collection tools like tests and questionnaire. The particular method was selected to know number of tourists that behave in different manner and have various perceptions towards the destination. The result would give the clear conclusion in numerical form. However, author has tried to gain information besides the questionnaire via direct interaction with them.

Since the research is purely based on the tourists and their perceptions, the author felt that qualitative research would give limited information about the tourists and can't access the views of higher number of Japanese tourists. Quantitative research is basically about the numerical data in order to explain the particular phenomenon. It responds to the questions such as, "what", "how many" and "for whom". According to the definition from Aliage and Gunderson (2002), Quantitative research is, "Explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods." (Muijs 2004.)

## 6 A LOOK INTO THE JAPANESE PERCEPTIONS

### 6.1 Data analysis

#### 6.1.1 Respondents profile

The total number of respondents in the survey was 51. Out of the 51 respondents, 21 were male, 29 were female and 1 was marked as others. The largest age group of respondents were from 21 to 35 i.e. 24 (47%), second followed by the age group from 36 to 60 i.e. 17 (34 %), 9 respondents (18 %) were from the age 61 and above and there was only 1 respondent who was 20 or below. While looking at the employment status of the respondents, 32 (63 %) were working, 14 respondents (28%) were students, 2 were retired and 3 were housewives.

The general question about the reason of travel was asked at the beginning of the questionnaire. It is very essential to know the reasons behind the travel of Japanese tourists, so in the survey it was obtained that Japanese tourists travel mostly because of various reasons like exploring new places, enjoyment, getting to know new people, sightseeing and spending time with family. The travel was found to be important due to need in finding inner peace, silence, nature, culture and different cuisines.

The majority of the respondents were the first time visitors in Finland. The total of 19 respondents had visited Finland before. However, only 5 of them had visited Rovaniemi or Lapland. The purpose of their visits was to spend their holiday as a tourist.

Sightseeing and nature were the most common factor for Japanese tourists to travel. Other reasons for their travel were to enjoy, food, culture, history, quality time with family, get away from hectic life, meeting locals, acquire knowledge and love for travel.

### 6.1.2 Sources of information and purpose of visit

Information acts as the basic necessity while travelling, it is very essential to know about the place, culture, general rules and regulations before a tourists visit a destination. In the survey, the respondents' sources of information were collected to ascertain popular source of information among the Japanese tourists. Some of the respondents also choose multiple information sources. As per the survey it was seen that 26 out of 51 respondents choose travel guide books for retrieving information, second popular source of information is getting information from friends, family and relatives. Next, only 16 respondents choose to use social media as the information point. Travel agencies were preferred by only 9 respondents.

23 (45%) respondents used individual service provider or company to book their travel services and product to Rovaniemi while 21 (42%) of them used travel agent. Only 5 respondents booked their travel services via friends and family while 2 mentioned that they used internet for the booking purpose.

One of the main aims of the thesis is also to find out the reasons or purposes of Japanese tourist to visit Rovaniemi. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options from the list. Figure 12 presents different reasons of Japanese to visit Rovaniemi.

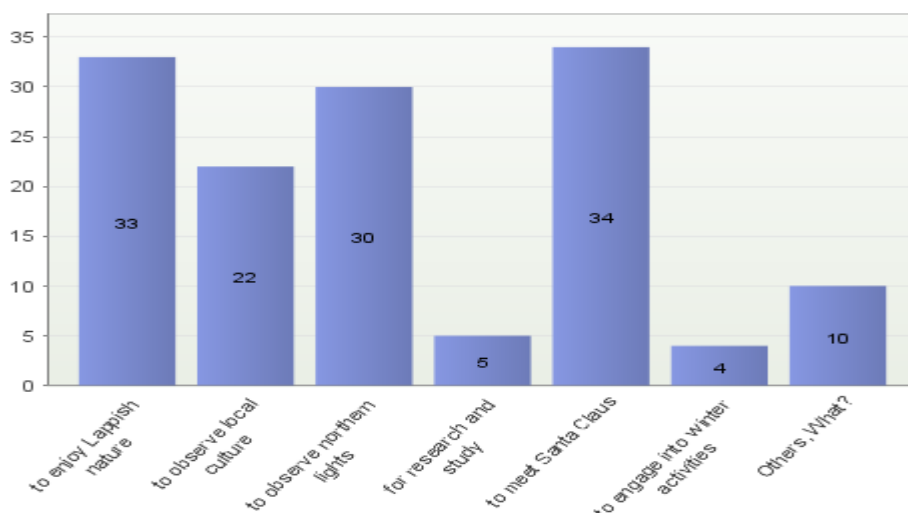


Figure 12. Purpose to visit Rovaniemi (N=51)

It was seen that the main purposes for Japanese tourists to visit Rovaniemi are to meet Santa Claus, enjoy Lappish nature and to observe northern lights. Only 22 tourists marked observing local culture as one of their main purposes to visit Rovaniemi. The other purposes are to see Lapland, Sami culture, to be in a quiet place and enjoy nature, to taste Lappish cuisine, to get to know the local and Sami people, reindeer and husky safaris and to see the local art and history.

After tourists have arrived to the destination they would still like to know more about something than the other. The data from the survey reveals that Japanese tourists like to know more about the local culture, different types of activities around the city, northern lights and lifestyle of the people. 15 (31%) respondents said that they would like to explore about the culture and tradition prevalent in Rovaniemi and 10 (20%) were more interested to know about different activities in Rovaniemi.

#### 6.1.3 Spending capacity, length of stay and favorite activities

In the survey it was found that 17 (33.3%) respondents spent 0 – 50,000 ¥ while other 17 spent 50,001¥ – 100,000 ¥. Remaining 12 respondents said that they would spend 100,001¥ – 200,000 ¥ followed by 3 respondents that mentioned to spend 200,001 ¥ – 300,000 ¥. There were 2 respondents who were spending more than 400,001 ¥. The expenses did not include the airfare and other transportation charges. During the process of data collection it was also narrowed that the amount of money was spent only in Rovaniemi. The exchange rate as on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 is 1 ¥ =0.007871 €, 10,000 ¥ =78.71€. (XE Currency converter)

Japanese tourists were found to be spending short period of time in Rovaniemi. 25 (49%) of the total respondents were staying for 2-3 days. 15 (29.4 %) of them said that they would stay for 4-5 days. Only 4 tourists mentioned that they would spend only a day and same number of tourists said that they would stay for 6-7 days.

One of the precious things that a traveler takes apart from the tangible things is memories and experience from the destination. They can be both pleasant and unpleasant memories and experience. The most memorable things for the Japanese tourist is meeting Santa Claus, it was mentioned as their memorable activities by 28 (57%) respondents. Besides, the other favorite activities were mentioned as: Northern lights hunting followed by activities like meeting locals, berry picking, traditional Finnish sauna, reindeer and husky farm visits and meeting Sami people.

#### 6.1.4 Finland, alternative travel choices and things to be considered to travel

It is important to know why a tourist visits Finland, besides the nature as an attraction what are the factors that helps a tourist in choosing Finland against other popular destinations in the world. 40 (78%) respondents had the same reason to choose Finland as it is safe, clean and peaceful. However, 20 (39%) said that they like cold countries due to which they choose Finland as their destination. The majority (76%) of Japanese tourist loved Rovaniemi very much and said that they would they would recommend Rovaniemi to their friends and family, remaining 24 % said that they may recommend it but no one had negative feedback. Also, 27 (52 %) of them are willing to visit Rovaniemi again and 24 (48%) of them said they may visit Rovaniemi.

Rovaniemi is beautiful in all the seasons. The experience one gets in one season may be completely different than another season. As Rovaniemi has an image of the winter destination, 26 respondents choose winter and Christmas as the best time to travel in Rovaniemi. 15 respondents said that summer would be the best time to travel due to mid night sun and bright nights. 10 respondents choose autumn as the best time to travel. While interacting with respondents it was observed that they had mixed feelings and they said that none of the season is bad to travel, the result are how they feel is the best among the good ones. For instance, respondents saying the summer to be the best time to visit also said that it would be also nice during



autumn and respondent saying autumn to be the best time said that winter too is very good time for visit due to lots of activities around the city.

In this ever challenging business of travel where tourists are being more demanding than ever and more informed, it is a must to know what they think. Knowing their alternative travel destination will help a lot in the product, destination development and promotion. The survey asked to mention the places that they would be if not in Rovaniemi. 25.5 % of total respondents said that they would be in Norway, 15% choose Germany as their alternative travel destination. However, 11% of the respondents said that they would be in Inari to see and know more about Sami people.

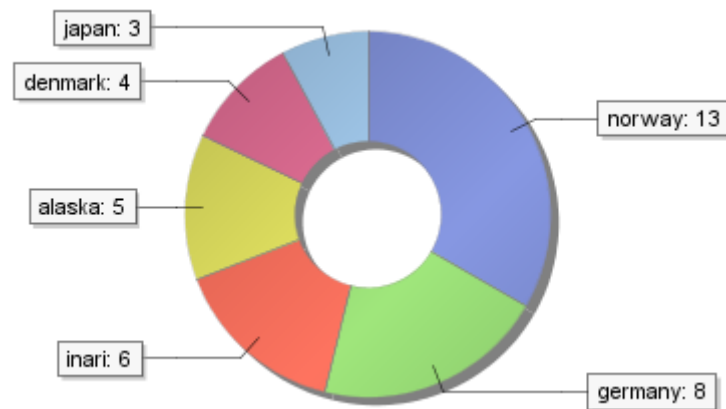


Figure 13. Respondents alternative choice of destination (n= 39)

Japanese tourists find that the most important thing to be considered while travelling to Finland is weather, availability of services and clothes. Rovaniemi has different types of weather as it has 8 seasons and weather changes very frequently during different seasons. It is very essential to consider what types of clothes is favorable for which weather, autumn in Rovaniemi may as well be cool or cold for some tourists therefore these kinds of general things should be considered by the tourists.

#### 6.1.5 Perception and travel preferences

Wide varieties of statements were presented before the Japanese tourists for gathering the perceptions towards different aspects relating to Rovaniemi. The table below presents the views of tourists in the scale and numerical form where 1=very dissatisfied, 2= dissatisfied, 3= neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4= satisfied and 5 = very satisfied.

The accommodation in Rovaniemi was rated as satisfactory by majority of the respondents i.e. 35 (68%) tourists. The average marking for it was 4.14.

Regarding the transportation in Rovaniemi, 20 (39%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. However, larger group of respondent i.e. 24 (47%) respondents felt that the transportation was satisfactory. The average score for the transportation is 3.63.

A larger group of participants i.e. 26 (51%) respondents felt that the entertainment facilities in Rovaniemi neither satisfied nor dissatisfied them. Only 18 (35 %) respondents said they were satisfied to entertainment facilities available. The average score for the entertainment in Rovaniemi is 3.39.

Shopping is another activity that tourists like to do from the destination. 26 (51%) respondent were satisfied with the shopping activities in Rovaniemi and 12 (24%) respondent felt it was very satisfactory to shop in Rovaniemi. The average score for the shopping is 3.88. The travel information about Rovaniemi was easy to find and 27 (53%) respondent were satisfied. Other remaining respondent had mixed feelings. The average score on the travel information is also 3.88 as the shopping.

Majority of the respondents i.e. 27 (53%) felt very satisfied with the natural landscape of Rovaniemi. The average score on the natural landscape of Rovaniemi is 4.47. Large number of respondents i.e. 29 (57%) felt that the climate in Rovaniemi is satisfactory and 16 (31%) respondent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The average score for climate in Rovaniemi is 3.75.

Table 1. Perception of respondents on major features of Rovaniemi in rating scale (1-5)

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
Accommodation in Rovaniemi	0	1	3	35	12	51	4.14
Transportation to and in Rovaniemi	0	2	20	24	5	51	3.63
Entertainment facilities in Rovaniemi	0	4	26	18	3	51	3.39
Shopping in Rovaniemi	0	5	8	26	12	51	3.88
Travel information about Rovaniemi	0	4	9	27	11	51	3.88
Activities in Rovaniemi	0	1	11	26	13	51	4
Natural landscape of Rovaniemi	0	0	3	21	27	51	4.47
Climate in Rovaniemi	0	1	16	29	5	51	3.75
Customer service in Rovaniemi	0	2	9	21	19	51	4.12
Prices of goods and services	1	1	18	20	9	49	3.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>3.9</b>

Customer service is one of the vital parts in the tourism industry where most of the products are intangible and service oriented. 21 (41%) respondents said that they were satisfied with the customer services experiences in Rovaniemi. 19 (37%) of the total respondents were very satisfied with the customer service in Rovaniemi. The average score for the customer service in Rovaniemi was 4.12. Last but not the least; tourists gave their views towards the price of goods and services. 20 (40%) respondents were satisfied about the prices while 18 (35%) respondents were neither satisfied

nor dissatisfied with the prices of goods and services in Rovaniemi. The average score for the prices is 3.9.

The overall average score of all the statement is 3.9 which represents that the Japanese tourists are satisfied with Rovaniemi and what it has offered to them.

An attempt was made via survey questionnaire to make the respondents define Rovaniemi in terms of service availability. 49 respondents were able to put their views in the paper. They defined Rovaniemi with many adjectives; most of them were; nice, wonderful, easy, satisfied, comfortable, cozy, refreshing and organized. Although many respondents have supported the present service facilities with nice comments it is the need that the difficulties they are having should be looked after. Figure 14 shows random selected comments from Japanese tourists.



Figure 14. Some of the comments that may help in improving the touristic facilities

The questionnaire also helped to gather the information regarding the measures or thing that could be done to make the experience memorable. 5 respondents mentioned that their experience is already memorable and they were having very wonderful experience during their stay. 8 other said that it would have been more memorable if they had more time to see more of

Rovaniemi. 11 respondents said it would be memorable if they had seen northern light.

At last the questionnaire ended with the open ended question by asking to comment on Rovaniemi or Finland but the respondents were more focused on Rovaniemi than Finland as a whole while putting their views. Figure 15 shows the good comments of the respondent which represent the 80% views out of total respondents.



Figure 15. Good comments from the respondents

Moreover, figure 16 illustrates comments that can be used for developing the image and brand of Rovaniemi like:

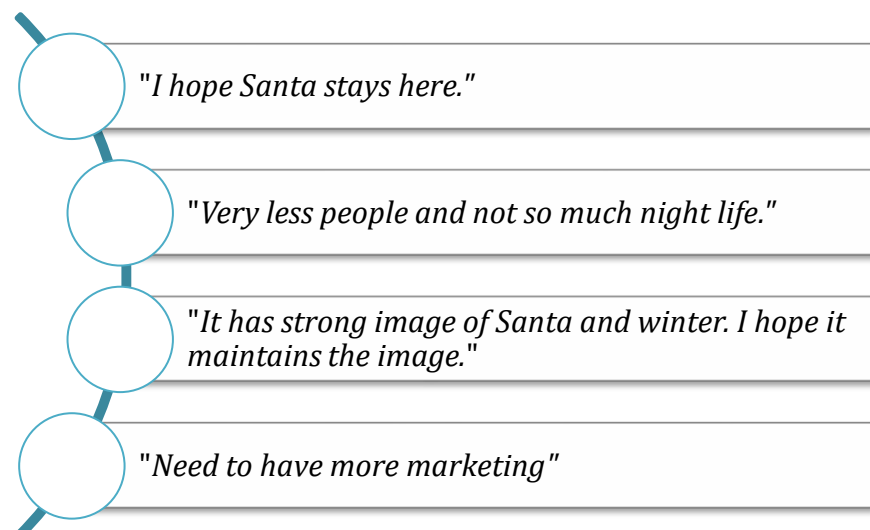


Figure 16. Comments that can be used for developing the image and brand of Rovaniemi

## 6.2 Validity and reliability

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), all the researches have their own purpose and have the “truth value”, “applicability”, “consistency”, and “neutrality” in order to be considered a worthwhile (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers 2002, 15).

The term “Reliability” in the research refers that the core results must remain same despite of multiple researches conducted on the given topic (Shuttleworth 2008). This research ensures reliability on the basis that the opinions acquired from the Japanese tourists using various research instruments: questionnaires, interview, focused group discussions, survey, and so on will be same and thus reliable. However, a result from the deep qualitative research on the same topic may differ from that of the quantitative ones. Another factor that changes the reliability of the research can be the stability in respondent's response. The retest method can make the respondent sensitive to the subject matter and hence can result in variation in responses. (Golafshani 2003.)

Validity in the research can be termed as the degree to which the particular instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. However the forms of validity are slowly being changed. The validity in the quantitative research can be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000).

Validity of this research is reflected on the selection of the respondents which covers all age group, as the research topic entail the perception of Japanese tourists of all age group towards Rovaniemi.

### 6.3 Limitation and challenges

The research was done to the niche tourist market in Rovaniemi. Due to its niche small tourism market it was not possible to find the tourist as per the thesis schedule of the author. This created delay in the carrying out the survey. The survey was done via questionnaire, which required lots of visit to the tourist spots in Rovaniemi. The survey started from the end of July till the mid October. One of the reasons for the longer survey period was also to find out the views of Japanese tourist visiting in different time of the year. However, it was not practical to conduct the survey for the long time as author was trying to follow the thesis schedule.

The survey taken to the Japanese visiting within four months of the thesis survey period may not represent the perception of entire Japanese tourist coming to Rovaniemi. Tourist visiting in different months may have different interests. For instance, tourist visiting in July may be interested towards berry picking and rafting whereas tourist visiting in October may travel in the hope to see the northern lights. Another limitation was language, if the author spoke Japanese language it would have been much easier to collect data and it would also facilitate the communication and informal interviews.

Since, the survey was carried out in the questionnaire form via direct contact with the tourists; the data collection process was time consuming. For the purpose of collecting the data author has visiting Santa clause village for 12 times, Rovaniemi airport for 3 times and Rovaniemi city center for 6 times. It was not easy to find large number of Japanese tourist in a day. It was not possible to collect data from every Japanese tourist when they are travelling in group because it would annoy them, it may hinder their travel experience and everyone in the group would wait when one or two members were busy with the questionnaire. The ethics of the author prevented in conducting the survey to more than two tourists in a group.

## 7 Discussion and conclusion

This research has found that prominent number of the Japanese tourists travel to make new memories for their life mostly in peace and serene environment. Rovaniemi as a touristic destination offers a similar ambience. Referring this context to the motivation behind travelling as given by Sharpley (2006), most of the travelers from Japan are motivated to go on a trip through psychological phenomenon. They travel to escape their busy schedules, keep their mind at peace and enjoy nature. People under these criteria are not influenced by advertisements.

Nevertheless, in order to attract other group of people, the touristic actors of Rovaniemi should focus on promoting Rovaniemi through audio or visual advertisements focusing on different aspects of Rovaniemi. Such as: the luring scenic beauty during eight diverse seasons. Besides, notably few respondents used social media as an information point. In today's world when social media is gaining its popularity astoundingly, it should be considered important in enticing tourists through promotional ads.

Some of the respondents conveyed that the Rovaniemi tourism marketing is minimum. The role of tourism industries should be augmented in enlarging the marketing of Rovaniemi as touristic place.

Further, the respondents have desired to get the information in Japanese. As Japanese are one of the major tourists to visit Rovaniemi, the major touristic information should have Japanese translation. This contributes for their convenient stay and in some way helps them to set a different image of Rovaniemi. Having mentioned that, the Visit Rovaniemi site provides option of selecting information in 9 languages including Japanese. During the data collecting process it was not found that the Japanese tourists have gone through the Japanese version of the visit Rovaniemi site.

The responses collected reflected that all the tourists had very good impression of Rovaniemi. 76% of the respondents liked every feature of



Rovaniemi and thus would propose their friends to pay a visit. 50% of tourist who visited Rovaniemi are looking forward to come to Rovaniemi again. Thus, the inference can be drawn that, Rovaniemi has set upon good impression among tourists. It is the responsibility of the tourist companies to perpetuate the impression.

Norway stood first when the respondents were inquired about their alternative travel destination. It will be beneficial for the travel agents in Rovaniemi to know the travel strategies of Norway and get influenced. According to Visit Finland (2013), Finland receives the highest number of overnight stays of Japanese tourists in comparison to other Nordic countries. This is one of the advantages for tourism in Finland. Hence, the tourist actors in Finland can put upon efforts to upgrade their touristic approach in order to maintain the record and also to increase the profit from this scenario.

On the other hand, the transportation in Rovaniemi is scored 3.63 only by the respondents. Local transportation plays a substantial role in allowing the tourists to reach to their destination efficiently. Any hindrance will discourage the tourists from visiting the place again or recommending their friends and relatives to travel to the same place. It is, therefore, important to improve transportation facilities for the travelers to visit places conveniently.

The focus should also be given to entertainment in Rovaniemi as the average score is 3.39 only. Entertainment is strongly connected to tourism. Musical concerts, sports competitions, cultural shows, etc. should be organized extensively. These factors appear to be vital in fulfilling the expectation that tourists have. Such events also help the tourists to collect unforgettable moments in Rovaniemi. With reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need to be entertained should be fulfilled along with improvement of transportation services in order to move further to fulfillment of other succeeding needs. The achievement of such needs aid in attaining the expectation resulting in satisfied tourists.

To conclude, the Japanese tourists hold positive perception towards Rovaniemi. They visit Rovaniemi and spend freely to enjoy the gifts of nature

both during winter and summer season. Such trips has proven to make them feel relaxed and at peace. Santa, northern lights and peaceful environment are the major attractions for them. However, with the views collected from the respondents, there are many aspects in which the tourist actors should shift their focus to. Advancement in such sectors will ensure that each expenses made by the tourists are worthy.

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## APPENDIX

### Japanese tourists' perception towards Rovaniemi

Warm greetings, I am tourism student doing my thesis research.

Please take couple of minutes to fill the survey. Your thoughts are highly appreciated.

**1. Gender**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Others

**2. Age**

- ☐ 20 or below
- ☐ 21-35
- ☐ 36-60
- ☐ 61 and above

**3. I am**

- ☐ A Student
- ☐ Working
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Others?

---

**4. I travel because**

---

**5. I have been to Finland before. If yes when and why?**

- ☐ Yes  

---
- ☐ No

**6. I have been to Rovaniemi before. If yes when and why?**

- ☐ Yes  

---

☐ No

**7.** I will stay in Rovaniemi for

- ☐ A day
- ☐ 2-3 days
- ☐ 4-5 days
- ☐ 6-7 days
- ☐ More than 7 days

**8.** My main purposes to visit Rovaniemi are

- ☐ to enjoy Lappish nature
- ☐ to observe local culture
- ☐ to observe northern lights
- ☐ for research and study
- ☐ for business
- ☐ to meet Santa Claus
- ☐ to observe midnight sun
- ☐ to experience Polar nights
- ☐ to engage into winter activities
- ☐ Others, What?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**9.** I choose Finland among other destinations in the world because

- ☐ I like cold countries
- ☐ It is comparatively cheaper than other Nordic countries
- ☐ It is safe, clean and peaceful
- ☐ Others, what?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**10.** I got information about Rovaniemi/ Finland from

- ☐ Advertisements
- ☐ Travel agency
- ☐ Travel guide books



- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Other websites
- ☐ Friends, family and relatives
- ☐ School, university, work
- ☐ Others, What?
- 

**11.** I would like to know more about Rovaniemi relating to

---

**12.** Things which I consider while planning a trip to Finland are

---

**13.** I would define Rovaniemi (in terms of tourists' service availability) as

---

**14.** On the trip to Finland I spend around

- ☐ 0 - 50,000 ¥
- ☐ 50,001 ¥ - 100,000 ¥
- ☐ 100,001 ¥ - 200,000 ¥
- ☐ 200, 001 ¥ - 300,000 ¥
- ☐ 300, 001 ¥- 400,000 ¥
- ☐ above 400,001 ¥

**15.** Please evaluate the following statements on the scale from 1 to 5. Where 1=Very dissatisfied 2= Dissatisfied 3=Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4= Satisfied 5= Very satisfactory

	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodation in Rovaniemi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation to and in Rovaniemi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertainment facilities in Rovaniemi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shopping in Rovaniemi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel information about Rovaniemi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Activities in Rovaniemi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural landscape of Rovaniemi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Climate in Rovaniemi                      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Customer service in Rovaniemi        ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Prices of goods and services          ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

**16.** The most memorable event/thing/activity for me in Rovaniemi is

---

**17.** My favorite activities in Rovaniemi are

- ☐ Meeting Santa Claus
  - ☐ Ice Fishing
  - ☐ Fishing
  - ☐ Skiing/skating
  - ☐ Husky safari
  - ☐ Reindeer safari
  - ☐ Berry picking
  - ☐ Rafting
  - ☐ Traditional Finnish sauna
  - ☐ Meeting locals
  - ☐ Northern light hunting
  - ☐ Experiencing Polar nights
  - ☐ Experiencing Midnight sun
  - ☐ Snowmobiling
  - ☐ Visiting museum
  - ☐ Visiting ice-hotel
  - ☐ Hiking/ walking in nature
  - ☐ Others, What?
- 

**18.** I booked my travel services and products to Rovaniemi via

- ☐ Individual service provider/ company
- ☐ Travel agent
- ☐ Friends/ family

☐ Others, What?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**19.** My experience would be more memorable if

\_\_\_\_\_

**20.** I am going to visit Rovaniemi again

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Maybe

**21.** I will recommend Rovaniemi to my friends and relatives

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Maybe

**22.** I think the best time to travel to Rovaniemi is

\_\_\_\_\_

**23.** If not in Rovaniemi I would be in

\_\_\_\_\_

**24.** If I need to comment on Rovaniemi/Finland. I would say

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you a lot for your thoughts and help. It will surely be a great asset for my thesis.